



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #1286CT-1 for Capitol Region Education Council

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative outlines a set of strategies that together will produce results if properly managed and phased in. The vision is to replace the factory model of schooling with a less seat bound notion that allows students to gain mastery over subject matter at any time and anywhere. The approach is clearly set out and ambitious requiring a committed faculty and leadership team. Equity is something that has been addressed ever since the <u>Sheff</u> decision and this plan makes clear that the approach is consistent with work that has been performed since that date.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>CREC's magnet schools, which enroll students primarily from 35 cities and towns throughout the region are the initial target for improvement "but specific programs may be initially implemented in a school or cluster of schools (e.g., middle schools) in order to allow for the rigorous evaluation of a pilot program to occur. The programs will then be modified as needed prior to district-wide implementation." This is vague at best--the proposal needs to have a starting point to begin the program and that starting point should be based in part on what is working or what has a solid research base. Another vague area is the plan for implementation. The way that high needs students will be addressed is not clear. We are told that the district is formed of two kinds of students "the first is students from high-income, suburban and rural families, who reside in school districts with typically high achievement. The second is students from urban, low-income families, who reside in school districts with low performing schools." But how will these two populations be differentially addressed within these magnet schools? The details may not all be worked out yet but this is missing a framework for action from which those details must emerge.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The logic model is unclear --the proposal states "Funding from the Race to the Top-District grant will enable CREC Schools to expand successful pilot programs throughout the school district"--what is judged as successful and how exactly they will be expanded throughout the district remains vague.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA starts from a challenging baseline with 50 percent of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from more advantaged ones. Progress in narrowing the achievement gaps have been worthy but somewhat uneven. Additionally many students are going to be first generation college students. There have been good progress made in some pilot programs inside the magnet schools but it is difficult to ascertain how many there have been and what the extent of the Professional development challenge might be as it is not clear how many schools are already doing well with personalized learning and in what contexts and how much effort will be needed to scale up success.</p>		

### B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
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(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Generally there is considerable evidence that progress over recent years has been in a positive direction. There has been a narrowing of the achievement gap. In reading more so than in Math but the trends are promising. However, it is unclear what the graduation rate trend has been. We are told that "the method for calculating the graduation rate changed significantly with the class of 2010; the graduation rate for the class of 2010 reflects a true cohort graduation rate, while the earlier rates were based on aggregate data that did not follow individual students." While the actual graduation rates of students hover around 84% this statistic is not as helpful in this context as knowing what the trend line has been over the last four years. As far as low achieving schools are concerned there is only one example given and that is the Montessori High School which in 2009 was labelled as a school in need of improvement. The schools' route back to success is very impressive following the hiring of the new principal. Another commendable aspect of the applicant's proposal is that information is widely shared through the web and there are plans to develop an even more comprehensive sharing of data. The periodical survey of parents and students around various topics and there are plans to expand this capacity even more.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district seems to possess a high level of compliance. Personnel salaries are posted on the website cited and there is a general willingness to share data and information on the LEA website.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA has strong autonomy that allows it to manage the Magnet Schools. CREC is one of six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) established under Connecticut General Statute (CGS) 10-66 a-n, and is authorized to operate interdistrict magnet schools. Each magnet school has flexibility over staffing and resources/ The applicant informs us for example that "all CREC schools have active data teams, and the data manager ensures that the schools receive follow-up training, technical assistance, and access to data as needed. The director focuses on providing the district with timely and useful data on student achievement, leading the development of an overall vision for the infusion of educational technology into CREC schools, and guiding the adoption of appropriate policies."</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is strong evidence of a collaborative and open approach to the development of the proposal including support from teachers. If there is a criticism it would seem that the process seems to have been too administrator driven with principals of the magnet schools "informed" about the application but not really invited to actively participate in its development. On the positive side it is clear that parent groups in the schools are welcome and often approach administration often with any ideas, concerns, or suggestions." Given the nature of the proposal in terms of preparing students for careers as well as college it would have been good to have included more business people in the planning and providing letters of support.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The gap in funding for Professional Development from the state to sustain significant changes in the approach to curriculum (through personalized learning) evaluation system and providing such basics as materials would seem to require a larger effort to reprioritize some spending. There are some clear signs that the district is well aware of the needs and gaps in services and there is a deliberate effort to reach out to develop partnerships that can fill those gaps. There is some impressive work in building these partnerships documented in the grant application and these are well described. The grant would enable the LEA to capitalize on long years of difficult work in this area.</p>		

# C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>Most of the strategies set out in this application will be of enormous help. Particularly strong approaches include the development of Student Success Plans: starting in sixth grade, 1:1 device program for all students. High School Capstone Project. However, there is a need for highly motivated teachers to help lead the effort and to particularly target the summer school interventions. The regional and school-based family centers known as ?Linking to Learning Centers will be of enormous benefit. Students will receive homework help and have access to enrichment activities focused on college and career readiness. Will high need students who find it difficult to work inside classrooms be referred to the centers and how far these Centers are from the schools are two questions that would be useful to answer. What have been their effectiveness in reducing dropouts and improving learning and behavior? It is all to the good that families will also have access to resources and services including crisis intervention.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	17
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>The state's new evaluation system for educators and administrators "ensures that teachers and leaders frequently measure student progress and use data to inform instruction" The applicant clearly has the tools to make good on the claims that personalized learning can become a reality. The state also has required that every teacher will have a Professional Growth Plan that is co-created with mutual agreement between the teacher and his or her evaluator and serves as the foundation for ongoing conversations about the teacher's practice and impact on student outcomes. There is a need for more explanation as to how the " primary vehicle" for professional development will be the Professional Development Laboratory (P21). How does P21 in fact support CREC's network of teachers, administrators, curriculum specialists, and magnet school leaders by providing centralized, coordinated, and easily accessible resources to help teachers and support staff members improve skills and expand areas of expertise." It is not clear how this works. If teachers will now gain CEU credits from this system in stead of doing classroom time how will they be evaluated on what they learn. It sounds like this is a part of an ambitious vision and is still a work in progress. Questions remain as to how appropriate resources would be allocated.</p>		

# D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The implementations sections generally present a well developed narrative but there are some gaps. One of them concerns how much success has the LEA experienced with its own professional development strategies. The narrative indicates that in "2012-13, CREC Schools increased central office personnel in order to provide embedded professional development to improve teaching and learning in CREC magnet schools. What is missing is the amount of time that was devoted to working with teachers and how effective that interaction was in terms of improving student outcomes. We are told that planning is difficult because every year the LEA is given a budget based on student attendance but it is always possible to make informed forecasts based on population growth and historical trends. What is promising is that the district's strategic plan adding six master teachers. This is a state of the art form of professional development with Master teachers responsible for the "provision of one-on-one professional development" and mentoring for teachers in need of support because they are new teacher of because of performance concern. It is unclear from what part of the budget these Master Teachers will be paid for. What is left unaddressed is the capacity, given all the uncertainty surrounding the budget and issues like teacher recruitment, high teacher turnover etc is the capacity and particularly the flexibility of the central office staff. After reading this narrative I am left uncertain as to whether given these constraints they can support and guide leadership teams inside the relevant Magnet Schools. This is all balanced by a clear eyed appreciation of what kind of transformation will be necessary if the LEA will be successful in implementing the grant.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan to move to a personalized learning system of education seems sound and one. One of the more important aspects of the proposal is the decision that "each school would be able to select personalized learning approaches that fit best with its school's theme and school community, rather than a "one size fits all model". It means that there is a degree of confidence between the central office and the Magnet Schools. It is clear also that parent feedback also informed the design with respect to the Linking to Learning centers, with regards to types of services offered, possible locations, and hours of operation" One concern is that there is no explicit mention of interoperability.</p>		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The annual reports of a third party evaluator to develop several ways to measure the effectiveness of the investments will assist with the goal of continuous improvement., The addition of pre and post test measures will be particularly helpful. The district seems eager to interpret and apply the information gathered.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There are ample strategies for ongoing communication and engagement built into this proposal. Particularly noteworthy is that "teachers will have personal pages where they will be able to communicate directly to parents about classroom announcements and activities, their child's performance, and setting up parent-teacher conferences. Teachers will also be able to directly communicate with parents by sending direct messages through the website's system. Teachers will be able to use this system as a way of increasing parent involvement, engagement, and communication."</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The performance measures are well considered and of particular note is the incorporation of The Learning and Development Inventory (LDI) developed by the Yale Child Study Center as a measure of students' perceptions of their own level of development in "several areas that are associated with high academic achievement, positive social adjustment, and social and emotional development."</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The evaluation process is quite comprehensive and provides key information on teachers, administrators, as well as student learning and Stakeholder feedback. Of particular significance is that the "learning and development of students, cohorts of students will be pre- and posttested on two outcome measures." Using two outcome measures in addition to a Trend Analysis that includes attendance, achievement, promotion rates, rates of completion of selected math and science courses will qualify this as a high quality approach,</p>		

# F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The costs are well set out and organized by project. However, no outside partners are identified to contribute funds awhich raises a question as to whether the Linking to Learn Centers can be funded beyond the grant period.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: There are some positive indications that the LEA will be able to sustain the grant. One important factor is that there is an additional \$32,396,000 in revenue which also,conservatively, assumes no increase in the per pupil grant that CREC receives from the state. The applicant has identified potential partners for Projects 4 and 6 (Partnerships and Wraparound Services), in the local area that have previously contributed to CREC schools. Additionally, a state grant for summer school could continue to support that program, while costs will decrease for such items as professional development and technology.		

# Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: Much of the narrative was not responsive to the detailed data intense focus of this competitive priority. There was a limited discussion of how the partnership would yield benefit from the targeting of resources. There was no discussion of how the strategy would scale the model beyond the participating students. The discussion as far as the partnership is concerned is not as specific as it needs to be in terms of addressing the particular criteria of this competitive priority.		

# Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The applicant has a good understanding of what it will take to develop a personalized learning environments. This starts with the approach to Magnet Schools which each has a particular theme that can enable teaching and learning to be far more personalized than in the past. The Response to Intervention (RTI) teams -are well placed to work with struggling students whether or not they have special education status. The budget for needed professional development and technical assistance nto really enable technology to play its role in helping students truly become self directed learners is realistic. Additional elements such as a summer program and 1:1 computing are very well integrated into the overall approach. The challenges ahead for each magnet school as they make efforts to find their own way to personalize their approaches are considerable, but the applicant has a clear eyed approach as to how to approach the transformation that will be necessary.		

Total	210	169
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #1286CT-2 for Capitol Region Education Council

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Capitol Region Education Council describes several strategies to achieve its vision for personalization of learning environments for students and teachers. The vision is based on a model that features a skills map that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, frequent assessment of all students combined with goal-setting, individual instruction plans for each student, and competency based progression.</p> <p>In order to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase equity through personalizes student support, the applicant proposes using a variety of activities and services such as implementation of student-driven project-based learning, an extended year program, expanded college and career focused programming, expansion of longitudinal tracking and data systems, establishment of partnerships with industries and organizations to inform the themes of schools, piloting f a new teacher evaluation system, and wraparound services to ensure access to enrichment activities focused on college and career readiness.</p> <p>The applicant also provides a detailed chart related to the core educational services and its current work in these areas as well as a plan for development.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a chart with a list of the schools that will participate in the project and includes information related to the total number of students participating and the needs status as well as the number of educators who will participated by school.</p> <p>While the applicant provides a chart with a list of the schools that will participate in the project,the reviewer was not able to determine if the selected schools meet the eligibility requirements because the applicant did not state how the schools were selected.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant assures district-wide changes will be carried-out through a four phase process: (1) research and needs assessment (2) design and development, (3) implementation and evaluation, and 4 sustainability. The applicant provides descriptive details as to how these processes will help to reach the outcome goals of the project and improve student learning outcomes for all students.</p> <p>The applicant does not address how the reform will be scaled up to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides detailed charts by grade level, content proficiency status, and subgroups delineating the performance goals to determine academic growth over time. The applicant will utilize the District Performance Index (DPI) to determine if students are improving across subjects areas. A goal of 88% on the DPI has been established for the year 2018.</p> <p>The applicant has also established ambitious and achievable annual goals to decrease achievement gaps among subgroups as measured by the Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test. In addition, the applicant has</p>		

set annual goals to increase graduation rates and college enrollment rates.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has documented a clear record of success in the past four years as evidenced in Table 1, Connecticut Mastery Test /achievement where in 1 years 2008-2009 through 2011-12 the percent of CREC students performing at or above the proficient leave on the CMT in Mathematics and Reading exceeded the statewide figures.</p> <p>Further evidence of a track record of success are provided in Table 2 which presents a comparison of achievement of students eligible for free or reduced price meals in CREC schools to those student statewide. The table documents that CREC students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch price meals consistently outperform free or reduced price meal eligible students statewide on the CMT in both Mathematics and /reading.</p> <p>The applicant also documents evidence of the gap being less between White and Black students at CREC schools when compared with these same two groups statewide on the CMT in both Mathematics and /reading. On CAPT Reading the gap in performance between Black and White students was cut in half over a four year period.</p> <p>Although the applicant provides an explanation for the decrease in graduation rates since 2009 stating the data for 2010 represents true cohort graduation rates, the fact remains there was a 13.2 percent decrease in the graduation rate from 2009 to 2010.</p> <p>To address the challenge of one low performing school, in 2009, the applicant hired a new principal and changes were made to the daily schedule to include a literacy and mathematics block. Teachers were provided ongoing professional development in literacy instruction. In addition, an Early Intervention Process was created which brought teams of teachers, support staff, and administrators together weekly to discuss best practices and possible interventions for students who were not meeting grade level expectations. Other efforts included designing common benchmark assessments, establishing a common plan time for teachers, implementing an after school reading and mathematics programs four days per week, implementing a schoolwide read at home program and offering literacy and mathematics resources to parents during parent education evenings.</p> <p>To ensure data is available to students, educators, and parents to inform and improve instruction, the applicant utilizes Performance Plus, an online student assessment data management system. Performance Plus provides a variety of reports to show progress at the student, school, and district level on common benchmark assessments. Teachers have access to the system which enables them to share the progress of their students. During parent conferences, student level reports are shared with the parent. Each school has a formal data team process</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant assures the actual personnel salaries at the school level for all instructional and support staff, actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional and teacher staff only and non actual personnel expenditures at the school level are made available publicly through the Civil Rights Data Collection found at <a href="http://orcddata.ed.gov">orcddata.ed.gov</a>. The district website will include a link to the CRDC site along with instructions for accessing reports.</p> <p>.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant assures it has sufficient autonomy to implement personalize learning environments because it is one of six Regional Education Service Centers established under the Connecticut General Statute and is authorized to operate interdistrict magnet schools.</p>		

The applicant describes how the State has provided a context for achieving the goals identified in the grant by mandating Student Success Plans for every student. The State has also developed evaluation systems to develop and reward effective teachers and principals.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant details how stakeholders were involved in the development of the proposal and other projects. Most CREC schools have an advisory council, which provides input into the direction of the school, from theme development to school improvement plans to building plans. The advisory council members consists of the school principal, a teacher representative, parent representative, and community or industry partners who help support the school theme.

A district team (to include union representation) was pulled together to look at the specific requirements of the grant proposal and to research and design those aspects of the program that were not well developed in the district's strategic plan. Initial research was carried out by district staff and information was shared during periodic meetings and more frequently through electronic communication. Representatives received feedback from their constituencies and brought it back to the group. Feedback was discussed and revisions were made in response to comments.

Almost all of CREC schools have established parent groups, which need to discuss their children's education and address issues that they want to bring forth to administration. CREC used this existing infrastructure to obtain feedback on the district's Race to the Top application. A summary of the proposed activities was provided to schools to present to parent groups, and feedback was solicited. Parent feedback also informed the design of the Linking to Learning centers with regards to types of services offered, possible locations, and hours of operations.

At the high school level, student leadership was engaged in a similar manner. Students were particularly interested in the increased use of technology.

A review of the appendices noted letters of support from the State Department of Education, a family of a child attending one of the CREC schools, Bushell Center for the Performing Arts, and Capitol Region Education Council.

The reviewer was not able to determine the number of collective bargaining teachers that were directly engaged in the development of the proposal as well as how many teachers actually support the grant project.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

To determine its current status in implementing personalized learning environments, the Race to the Top District planning team reviewed archival documents, previous grant proposals, previous grant proposals, previous and current strategic initiatives planning documents and a trend analysis of student academic performance and their outcomes. The applicant also provides a table showing the strengths and challenges as a result of the review team's analysis.

The applicant also provides a table that presents the school district's plan for addressing needs and gaps. The table includes activities, timelines, deliverables, and parties responsible.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies four strategies to ensure students are prepared for college and careers. These strategies include targeted and intensive services, expanded college and career programming, implementation of technology to support data driven decision making, individualized instruction, and partnerships.

The activities described in strategy one encourages students to identify and pursue learning and development goals, deepen learning experiences, master critical content, and offer variety in instructional approaches. To do this, the applicant proposes to design a skills map that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The skills map will serve as a framework for individual learning plans and facilitate a competency based learning system. After the development of a skills map, the

applicant describes the transition to personalize learning that will be facilitated through an online platform, which will provide parents students, teachers, and administrators real-time snapshots of individual progress.

The on-line portal will provide students access to assignments, videos, and other instructional materials as well as learn at their own pace to demonstrate competency.

The applicant also provided a detailed plan outlining the targeted services by grade spans (P-5, middle School, and high School. All of the grade level plans address the needs of all learners to include activities for high needs students. However, the targeted services increase as students progress through middle and high school to ensure students are college and career ready. The targeted activities ensure students have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. Students graduating from high school will be required to produce a Capstone project demonstrating their ability to think critically, communicate, and problem solve.

Additionally, the activities in strategy two will help students connect learning to future success. Beginning in grade 9 CREC schools will embed "habits of mind" competency requirements such as time management, study habits, critical thinking, technology fluency teamwork, and written and oral communication in high school classes.

To prepare students for careers, the applicant proposes to promote among the students the competencies that employers desire in new hires such as strong work ethic, the to show initiative and motivation, and emotional skills for responding in a respectful way to appropriate criticism.

The applicant proposes to develop a technological platform which will be accessible by both students and their families to guide students from the beginning to tend of the college search. Families will have access to their students' account so that they are informed of every action their students have taken.

The applicant assures that CREC teachers have been provided the tools and training to use data to drive instruction and inform individualized learning plans. The applicant documents that teachers engage in weekly data team meetings and implement formative assessments to ensure all students are learning at high levels.

The applicant articulates that it will partner with NWEA to personalize learning for CREC students by using quickly produced data to identify individual students' current levels of achievement as well as readiness to learn and translate that date into instructional resources best suited for students. The information from NWEA and interim assessments will be available to students, teachers, and parents and will facilitate a collaborative goal-setting process.

The applicant also proposes to implement an Advisor/Advisor program for students to develop a close relationship with at least one adult in the school building to promote their learning and development as well as encourage them to stretch themselves outside of the typical classroom environment.

To ensure mechanisms are in place to provide support to students the applicant will establish an expert team of clinical staff with the ability to respond to an individual school's emergent mental health needs. The team will train school-based teachers and other professional staff.

For students who qualify for special services the applicant proposes to provide training and support to teachers and student services professional staff for the development of Student Success Plans.

The applicant does not address the training that will be in place to support students to ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

To ensure teachers and leaders increase their capacity to support students progress toward meeting college and career ready standards the applicant's new evaluation system ensures that teachers and leaders frequently measure student progress and use data to inform instruction. The goal of the evaluation system is to assess strengths and growth areas and provide feedback needed to improve effectiveness. The evaluation system enables principals and other educator supervisors to store observation data based on standard and district-developed frequencies and rubrics.

Every teacher will have a Professional Growth Plan that will serve as the foundation for ongoing conversations about the teacher's practice and impact on student outcomes.

Additionally, the applicant will utilize the Professional Development Laboratory (P21) as the main vehicle delivering professional development. P21 supports teachers, administrators, curriculum specialists, and management school leaders by professional centralized resources to help teachers and support staffs improve skills and expand areas of expertise.

To assist teachers in adapting content and instruction, teachers will be able to utilize P21 to view clips of sample lessons

taught by master teachers, download resources, find contact information for support staff, and follow links to useful websites. The websites offers three main types of resources for teachers that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs. Teachers are able to access resources such as model instructional strategies, content areas resources and resources from past professional developments.

P 21 will also provide access to digital professional development resources anytime, anywhere. The intensity and mode of professional development a teacher receives will be determined based on the level at which the teacher has developed a particular group of skills.

To ensure continuous improvement common planning time will be used primarily for discussion, planning, and analysis as well as curriculum and instruction.

The proposal is lacking specific information related to measuring student progress toward meeting college and career standards. The applicant does not specifically address how it will use achievement data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and provided limited information on how data would be use to improve instruction.

While the applicant focuses highly on teachers having access to training, tools, and other resources, it does not specifically address how school leaders and school leadership teams will have training, policies, tools, and other resources accessible to them.

The applicant does not provide specific details related to its plan to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective teachers and highly effective principals.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant sufficiently describes its policies, practices, and rules that facilitate personalized learning and the district's central office organizational chart was recently revised. In 2012-13 the district increased central office personnel in order to provide embedded professional development to improve teaching and learning in CREC management schools. Two new directors of elementary and secondary education were hired to act as coaches and mentors to principals. To provide guidance and implementation of Common Core State Standards and other instructional support, the district added Directors of English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science Curriculum specialists in the content areas to support schools and work directly with teachers as they implemented professional development knowledge and skills learned on best practices.</p> <p>To carry-out the goals of the project all CREC schools have active data teams. An operational arm of the district was created adding an assistant superintendent for operations and a school business manager. Principals develop budgets, schedules, and select their own staff for hire. The central Office of CREC Schools provides support and guidance to school leadership teams.</p> <p>In 2012-13, all CREC schools adopted a common district calendar. CREC schools also share a common curriculum based on standards, but the way curriculum is taught varies significantly from one school to the next based on the school them, model of instruction, and community of learners.</p> <p>The district curriculum is being revised to align with Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts. However, the district currently does not have a curriculum based on mastery and this is its next step. CREC does not have policies that would inhibit student progression and assures it will commit to developing a structure whereby students can demonstrate mastery when they are ready to do so.</p> <p>To ensure learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, the district has fully implemented Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) and Connecticut's Response to Intervention model. RTI teams are in place at each school to communicate and make decisions around the interventions need for struggling students, regardless of special education status.</p> <p>While the applicant states that CREC schools have active data teams, it does not provide information specific to school leadership teams that are involved in making decisions over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and school-level budgets. Instead, the applicant these areas of responsibilities are the responsibility of the principal.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>He applicant has provided a detailed chart related to a plan for implementation of personalized learning environments. The chart includes activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties. The plan is comprehensive and covers all major areas such as the curriculum, professional development, data driven decision making for the district and school, mastery of standards, policies for the district and schools, creation of partnerships and communication with families.</p> <p>However, in reviewing the plan the applicant does not provide specific information relevant to how parents will have access to necessary content learning resources and student academic and attendance data. While the applicant states parents will be trained on the use of technology, there is reference to parents having access to a Parent Portal to ensure they are involved in their child's education.</p> <p>The applicant also does not ensure the use of interoperable data systems that include human resources data, student information data, budget data, and instruction improvement data systems.</p>		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides information related to its plans for continuous improvement and assures that an independent evaluator will conduct a supplemental evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the investments. In addition, the applicant has identified five goals of the evaluation of which three activities involve annual review of project progress.</p> <p>To determine the effect of the project on learning and development of students, cohorts of students will be given pre- and post-test on two outcomes measures. The applicant also proposes to conduct a trend analysis on data such as attendance, academic achievement, promotion rates, and rates of completion of selected math and science courses.</p> <p>Although, the applicant proposes to review changes in students' education aspirations/expectations and changes in administrators and teachers' attitudes, knowledge and skills annually, the annual review of data is insufficient for continuous improvement.</p> <p>The narrative also does not address how information on the quality of investments funded by the grant will be shared publicly.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant asserts that it is committed to engaging internal and external stakeholders and the district's main website will serve as a hub of information about the school district as a whole. The applicant states there will be links and information connected to each individual school which are designed for the families and students.</p> <p>Teachers will have personal pages where they will be able to communicate directly to parents about classroom announcements and activities their child's performance, and setting up parent-teacher conferences.</p> <p>The strategies do not provide opportunities for face to face meetings to share engage internal and external stakeholders and there are no opportunities for stakeholders to provide input and/or feedback.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has set achievable performance measures by content area and subgroups with annual targets as required. The applicant also proposes to use the teacher and administrator evaluation as a tool to measure teacher/leader effectiveness as well as the District Performance Index (DPI) as a measure that is directly tied to student outcomes. The rationale for selecting the DPI is that an increase in the DPI indicates students have improved in achievement levels and are demonstrating academic growth. Also, the overall DPI and DPI for all subgroups takes into account the performance on mathematics,</p>		

reading, writing and science.

Additionally common benchmarks will be used in grade Pk-10 which allows educators to monitor the academic growth and improvement of students over time. CREC is also piloting the Northwest Evaluation Association's MAP Assessments which are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and administered three times a year.

For grades K- the MAP assessment for reading and mathematics will be used as indicators of successful implementation of the grant.

The applicant has also selected a total of 12 performance measures and has provided a rationale for selecting the measures.

The applicant does not describe how it will improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the project through the use of longitudinal data. The data warehouse will provide a central repository of all educational related data collected by the district and provides access to all stakeholders.

The applicant does not address how it will evaluate professional development activities, use of time or other resources.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes in its narrative the costs related to the project and which includes contributions from the local, state, and private funding. In addition, the applicant provides costs for hiring of personnel and gives detailed related to the justification for the positions. The costs associated with the project appear to be reasonable.</p> <p>The applicant also provides a comprehensive narrative of the six projects that are part of the grant request and the costs associated with each project as well as the rationale for selection and describe the alignment of the projects to the core service areas.</p> <p>The applicant does not include identification of the funds that will be used for one time investments in Tables 4-1-4-6.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant documents anticipated revenue stream increasing in years 2012-2016. The increase in revenue is based upon projected increase in student enrollment between 2012-1 and 2015-16. In 2015-16 revenue is projected to increase by 32 million dollars.</p> <p>The applicant also proposes to review staffing formulas, dollars spent on professional development, and instructional supplies. Additional funding will also be pursued through the expertise of the district's grant department and the consortium's foundation. Potential sources include the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Nellie Mae Foundation both of which have provided financial support in the past. The applicant also anticipates a \$1 million summer school grant from the State Department of Education.</p> <p>The applicant asserts that some of the RRTD funds will be used for capacity building and fewer resources will be needed to sustain such efforts following the grant period. Additionally, the applicant believes costs for professional development, technical support contracts, data warehouse maintenance, will diminish.</p>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to integrate Regional Family Resource Centers to offer students homework help and access to enrichment activities focused on college and career readiness. These regional centers will also increase family engagement in the learning process and strengthen the home-school connection.</p> <p>The applicant will establish a crisis intervention team for families and students who need more intensive services. The team will create individual intervention plan based on the state's RTI model, SRBI.</p> <p>The applicant also provides a description of the partnership it has established with the National School Climate Center (NSCC). NSCC is an organization that helps schools integrates crucial social and emotional learning with academic instruction. In 2011-12, all CREC schools administered the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory. The school climate survey leads to another partnership with the University of Connecticut's Center for Behavioral Education and Research. Other partnerships include the youth services bureaus, Polaris Mental Health Clinic, DCF Foster Care clinic, and Rachael's Challenge (an anti-bullying program).</p> <p>The applicant proposes to provide support to students in need of services through the RTI process and a screening process that will consider the following indicators: attendance, truancy, office referrals, discipline, history of judicial involvement, history with the Department of Family Children Services, alcohol/drug usage, hospitalization, mobile crisis calls, self-injurious behaviors, and eating disorders.</p> <p>The applicant will design an IEP-like community resource plan to be used for identified students and families. Indicators that will measure the result of Student and Family Crisis Team include the number of students who indicate they feel safe at school as well as the median rating on dimension for Social-Emotional Security on the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory. The crisis team will also demonstrate effective ways to integrate educational and other services.</p> <p>The applicant does not address its plan to scale the model. The applicant also does not address any of the elements in subcriterion five.</p>		

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Throughout the project narrative the applicant has documented evidence of a comprehensive plan to creating learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college and career ready states or college and career ready graduation requirements. The applicant details activities that will accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by increasing the effectiveness of educators to meet the academic needs of all students</p>		

Total	210	167
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #1286CT-3 for Capitol Region Education Council

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(1) Articulating a Comprehensive and Coherent Reform Vision</p> <p>The applicant states that Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) has a vision for reform that is “grounded in the belief that personalization of learning environments for students and teachers can promote high intellectual performance of all students and remedy disparities in achievement and readiness for college.”</p> <p>CREC articulates a very compelling and convincing vision for a Personalized Learning Environment. Components of the PLE include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students progress through curriculum at their own pace through mastery of skills and demonstration of competencies. While academic expectations remain unchanged, the order and time in which students progress through discrete units of learning are variable.</li> <li>• Each student drives his/her own path of learning. While learning must be aligned to standards for all students, the ways in which students demonstrate mastery of those standards must be guided by their own learning interests, preferences, and needs.</li> <li>• The role of the teacher must be redefined and expanded. When learning is personalized for all students, teachers become facilitators of students’ learning. Additionally, other members of the community, as well as online resources, become informal teachers of students.</li> <li>• Learning can happen in a variety of ways, in a variety of places, and at any time. Students’ learning can continue outside of school and beyond the traditional school day.</li> <li>• Students must engage in learning opportunities that are project-based and authentic. Students must be afforded the opportunity to work on long-term projects that promote connections across the disciplines and real world problems.</li> </ul> <p>CREC provides a chart that is compelling and logical to communicate all four assurance areas. It explains what current work is happening around each assurance area and additionally what planned and proposed work will occur under the conditions of the proposal. For example current work around assurance #1 includes: adoption of Common Core; partnerships with local industries to provide career and higher education opportunities. While proposed work includes: skills map aligned to Common Core; a Coordinator of Partnerships to formalize relationships and establish new opportunities. Similar logical strategies are used for each of the other assurance areas.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation</p> <p>(a) The applicant states that various schools throughout the district have already implemented some elements of personalized learning. All of CREC’s full-time magnet schools are “positioned to participate” in RTTT-D initiative at the onset. However the applicant states that specific programs described in the grant proposal may be initially implemented in a school or cluster of schools (e.g., middle schools) in order to allow for the rigorous evaluation of a pilot program to occur. The programs will then be modified as needed prior to district-wide implementation.</p>		

This rationale for implementation is sound and logical; however the applicant does not appear to have a clear and defined starting point for implementation (grade level bands, subject area, etc.)

(b) The rationale for including all school is sound and can be leveraged for LEA wide reform.

(c) The applicant provides a very comprehensive and detailed chart to address all components of A(2)(c).

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

9

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(3) LEA Wide Reform and Change

To reach its ambitious yet achievable outcome goals, CREC Schools has developed a systematic and research-based approach to project development. District-wide change will be facilitated through a four-phase process: (1) Research and Needs Assessment, (2) Design and Development, (3) Implementation and Evaluation, and (4) Sustainability.

The applicant has a strong high quality plan. The plan includes deliverables, a compelling time, and a highly logical and achievable, yet ambitious set of goals and strategies. The plan includes measurable actions and persons responsible in each of the four phases.

The logic model will help students to improve learning outcome and will also provide meaningful progress monitoring along the way for CRE.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(4) LEA Wide goals for improved student outcomes

The applicants vision has a high degree of likelihood to result in improved student learning and performance due to the decision to include growth measures and a target for achievement. The applicant sets goals and targets that are both overall and in student sub-groups represent targets that are ambitious, achievable.

CREC uses to tests the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) assesses grades 3 through 8 in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing; and in grades 5 and 8 in science. The Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) assesses grade 10 in the areas of mathematics, reading, writing, and science.

(a) For determining growth, CREC is using the District Performance Index (DPI). An increase in the DPI indicates students have improved in achievement levels and are demonstrating academic growth. The overall DPI, and the DPI for all subgroups, takes into account performance on each assessment. Therefore, an improvement in one DPI indicates an improvement across all subjects. This is a sound measure for assessment.

(b) The applicant demonstrates strong and clear goals around reducing the achievement gap for all sub-groups. The applicant utilizes multiple ways of measure to examine the reduction.

(c) CREC sets the ambitious goal of improved graduation rates by sub-group to a target of 94% by the end of the grant cycle.

(d) CREC sets the ambitious goal of 100% college enrollment by the end of the grant cycle. It represents a growth of almost 18% over the grant cycle; but is a sound and focused goal.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

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	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success</p> <p>(a) The applicants overviews many charts and data sets to demonstrate a strong track record of improvement over the past five years. Improvement in both reading and math overall has been steady. Increase in sub-groups and reductions in the achievement gaps between those gaps is demonstrated by the applicant.</p> <p>(b) The applicant demonstrates a track record of improvement in it's high-need schools. The applicant details one such school; CREC Montessori Magnet School that was identified as a school In Need of Improvement by the state of Connecticut in 2008. The school was reorganized by CREC. After four years of improvement sub-groups; black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students have improved dramatically between 15 - 20% points of improvement in both math and reading. At the same time this school closed the achievement gap in sub-groups as well. The applicant goes to great lengths to demonstrate clear and compelling growth for this one school, but also then highlights other specific magnet schools in CREC that have demonstrated improvement as well.</p> <p>(c) CREC utilizes Performance PLUS, an online student assessment data management system, to track student achievement longitudinally. During parent conferences, student- level reports are shared with the parent. Each school in the CREC district has a formal data team process. The data made available to CREC educators enables them to make decisions about the effectiveness of their instructional strategies. The above evidence makes a sound case that the applicant is organized and transparent with student performance data both internally and externally.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments</p> <p>CREC Schools reports the following data to the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) and present sound evidence for B(2).</p> <p>(a) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's classification used in the F-33 survey of local government finances;</p> <p>(b) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only</p> <p>(c) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and</p> <p>(d) Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level.</p> <p>The data are available publicly through the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). The district website will include a link to the CRDC site, along with instructions for accessing reports. CREC includes a sample report in the appendix.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(3) State context for implementation</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates sufficient autonomy to implement personalized learning environments. For example it is one of six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) established under Connecticut General Statute and is authorized to operate inter district magnet schools.</p>		

The applicant also describes the union in support of the RTTT-D proposal. CREC describes a state level collaborative; CREC is one of ten school districts who are participating in this year's pilot of Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). Initiatives such as these demonstrate a balance between autonomy and support with the state to support the implementation of a personalized learning environment.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support

(a) The applicant does provide details about stakeholder engagement. For example, CREC schools have an advisory council, that include the school principal, a teacher representative, parent representatives, and community or industry partners who help support the school theme. In development of this proposal the applicant states that the Initial research was carried out by district staff, and information was shared during periodic meetings and more frequently through electronic communication. Representatives received feedback and brought it back to the group. Feedback was discussed and revisions were made in response to the comments.

Additionally, the applicant describes process and engagement from the team of principals. During an administrative retreat they developed four goals: Inspire High Intellectual Performance, Graduate 100% of Students College Ready, Be Centers of Excellence, and Engage the Mind, Body, and Heart of every student. The applicant states that the four goals established by the group are in alignment with what has been proposed in the Race to the Top District Grant.

(i) CREC has collective bargaining representation. The applicant demonstrates evidence of engagement and support for the proposals from teachers. For example, teachers and union representation added aspects to the plan; specifically developing proposals for planning curricular units based on Common Core State Standards and personalized learning practices, and to model and evaluate those units with their colleagues.

(b) There are a number of letters of support from key stakeholders:

- Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
- Numerous letters from PTO school and council level leadership
- The Bushnell Center for Performing Arts
- State of Connecticut Department of Education
- Parents

The nature, content, and broad support from these letters provides evidence of stakeholder partnership and engagement.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps

The extent to which each LEA has demonstrated evidence of—

A high-quality plan for an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal contained within the applicant's proposal, including identified needs and gaps that the plan will address.

The applicant follows a logical sequence in development of a high quality plan through the proposal by starting with LEA principals and leaders developing a needs and gaps analysis through overall LEA strengths and challenges.

The applicant provides a logical foundation that identifies gaps. For example of one of the biggest challenges: CREC Schools currently do not have a personalized, web-based learning platform for students that parallels what is offered to

principals and teachers.

The applicant then develops a timeline of the high quality plan that addresses both the strengths and challenges. The plan includes: activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The relationship between the activities and the deliverables is reasonable and provides an appropriate path for improvement. There is convincing logic to the overall plan and these activities support the LEA's vision.

### C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(C)(1) Learning</p> <p>CREC offers a framework and an approach to learning that implements rigorous standards based curriculum for excellence with all students and defines rigor as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rigorous content is cognitively complex, thought-provoking, challenging and conceptual;</li> <li>• Rigorous environments ensure students perform at their maximum potential while building their will to persevere;</li> <li>• Rigorous skills foster independent, self-directed and productive learners who are creative and critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and innovators.</li> </ul> <p>The applicant offers 4 strategies that drive learning toward excellence and rigor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive and targeted services to students</li> <li>• Expanded college and career programming</li> <li>• Data driven decision making</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> </ul> <p>The applicant addresses all aspects of (c) (1) Learning with an overall convincing and complete high quality logical plan.</p> <p>With the support of parents and educators - all students:</p> <p>(a) (i) The applicant addresses the need for all students to understand what they are learning and how it is connected to their goals and success. For example students in grades K-5 will utilize a skills map that will articulate learning targets to see targets mastered, those upcoming, and targets needing additional practice. Parents and educators will utilize this tool in cooperation with student learning. Additionally, this skills map concept will follow students throughout middle and high school. Other strategies such as the "flipped classroom model" (starting in middle grades) will help provide context for students to pace themselves and understand the context other learning.</p> <p>(ii) The applicant provides expanded college and career programming beginning in middle school. The applicant also addresses the implementation of the Common Core standards with assessment that address college and career readiness standards. The applicant presents a high quality plan that addresses student how their learning is connected to these standards.</p> <p>(iii) Students will be given multiple opportunities throughout K-12 with particular intensity at the middle grades and high school to pursue meaningful and engaging learning based on academic interest. The plan allow for this type of project based and problem based learning and also flexibility through the "flipped classroom" model. Additionally high school student will be building interest and relevance around a "capstone" project that is required by all students and based on interest.</p> <p>(iv) Students will have access to diverse cultures. As a function of the design of CREC school they involve choice and draw</p>		

from a wide variety of backgrounds. In particular the school works to promote and encourage the diversity through marketing towards low-income students, high-need students, wealthy families, and middle class families in the “suburbs”. The number provided by the applicant reflect this diversity. The applicant communicates that diversity “enriches us” and includes goals and strategies throughout the application to support that vision.

(v) The applicant provides opportunities and programming so that the curriculum reflects goal-setting, teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, communication, and problem solving. For example; the capstone project mentioned above is an example of this. The applicant also demonstrates these opportunities throughout the grant with problem based learning, 1:1 collaborative learning, as well as utilizing the “flipped classroom” model. Additionally, partnerships with local businesses and corporations are strategies in middle school and high school that promote teamwork and critical thinking as well as a creative and engaging approach to learning.

(B) (i) The applicant presents strong evidence to address that all student in cooperation with educators and parents have access to a personalized sequence of instructional content and skills aligned to the students goals. For example in each grade band: K-5, MS, and HS; the applicant employs skills maps for instruction as mentioned above in (A)(i).

(ii) The applicant provides evidence for high quality environments and variety of instructional approaches: 1:1 technology in a personalized learning environment, magnet school themed-based problem learning involving teamwork and collaboration, independent learning through a capstone project, and digital blended learning and teamwork through the “flipped classroom” model.

(iii) Content by the applicant is high-quality as defined by standard of rigor that guide the learning and planning as noted above in (c)(1) Learning.

(iv) The applicant will address ongoing feedback through formative assessment as noted in “flipped classroom” model and also through benchmark assessments through the vendor, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA).

(a) Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS) through NWEA is a computer based evaluation tool that provides ongoing progress monitoring around student growth. Teachers will use results to individualize the instruction. This satisfies criteria.

(b) The applicant sets forth a high quality plan for a personalize learning environment starting at grade 5 and continuing through high school.

(v) The applicant addresses the “whole child” for student in “high-need”. They have a standing track record of promoting health development for students at risk that show educational failure, are in foster care, or have experienced homelessness. The LEA promotes a vision to support through outside health organizations through collaboration with the CREC. The LEA demonstrates these goals through the following examples:

- Partnership with Transition Resource Counseling, College and Career Readiness Counselors and Transition Coordinator (TABS)
- Develop training modules for staff on transition related topics
- Implementation of transition needs assessment process within one school
- piloting work based learning experiences for students within home based communities
- Other examples of such planning are also included reflecting evidence for a high quality plan.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading

CREC offers a framework and an approach to teaching and leading that represents a high-quality plan. The plan includes an evaluation system that addresses improving learning and teaching by personalizing the environment and is centered around the common core standard and college and career readiness standards. The plan does incorporate rigorous courses of study and provides for students to accelerate learning through supports towards their needs.

(a)(i) CREC supports effective implementation of personalized learning environments through development of leadership structures that support providing a 24/7 access to professional development for teachers. Also, CREC develops collective plans and strategies for ongoing teacher time and tasks to collaborate; this work and it's goals support the implementation of personalized learning environments.

(ii) CREC supports adapting content and instruction to engage students in common and individual tasks as supported through the teacher professional development and capacity building. Connecticut's new evaluation system for educators and administrators ensures that teachers and leaders frequently measure student progress and use data to inform instruction (a.iii), provides a system for improving instructional practice (a.iv), offers actionable information

(iii) The applicant demonstrates capacity building frequent measure student progress toward meeting college and career readiness through professional develop. Connecticut's new evaluation system for educators and administrators ensures that teachers and leaders frequently measure student progress and use data to inform instruction

(iv) Connecticut's new evaluation system for educators and administrators ensures that teachers and leaders provides a system for improving instructional practice

(B) (i) The applicant offers support for actionable information to help teachers identify learning approaches through providing information to help leadership teams improve effectiveness through the new state teacher and principal evaluation system as well as ongoing reports from NWEA.

(ii) The applicant develops capacity for high quality learning resources through 1:1 and the "flipped classroom" model.

(iii) Processes and tools to match student needs is addressed through both ongoing professional development focuses as well as capacity building through common planning time structure. For example, common planning time will provide actionable structure for teachers assess and modify instructional practices related to projects-based learning, differentiated instruction, student-directed learning, and other ongoing digital learning.

(c)(i) The applicant states that the new Connecticut Teacher Evaluation System serves as a measure to identify the number of students who receive instruction from highly effective teachers. As well it will enable principals to store observation data based on standard and district developed frequencies and rubrics. It will also provide aggregate data for school team to develop needs for professional development and structures for continuous improvement.

(ii) The applicant demonstrates evidence for training systems and practices for continuous improvement teaching performance with the goal of improving student performance. CREC plans the implementation of high quality support, modeling, and research based resources provided through P21 - an always on professional development system for educators.

(D) The applicant states that the new Connecticut Teacher Evaluation System (CTES) assess strengths and growth areas and provide feedback needed to improve effectiveness. CREC states that the previous system had failed to define excellent practice and results, and provide opportunities for growth and recognition. For example, under CTES Each and every teacher will have a Professional Growth Plan that is co-created with mutual agreement between the teacher and the evaluator, this serves as the foundation for ongoing impact on student outcomes.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
(D)(1) LEA Practices, Policies, and Rules		
(a) For this current school year, CREC Schools increased Central Office personnel in order to provide embedded staff development to teaching and learning. The district has already shown evidence to increase capacity and leadership at the		

governance level for RTTT-D reform; for example in 2011-2012 SY CREC added a Director of Data, Research, Analysis and Technology as well as a Data Manager. The operations arm of CREC added an Assistant Superintendent for Operations. These additions develop a greater capacity for the proposed reform.

(b) The district's strategic plan also includes the addition of six master teachers that would be responsible for 1:1 professional development and implementation support. This teacher leader model supports each school, but schools have enough autonomy for school based decisions for schedules and length of day.

(c) The applicant provides for students to advance towards mastery based on progress and not seat time. For example, one CREC school has implemented the Cambridge IGCSE Board Examination System (that provides a proficiency-based high school pathway based on mastery.) CREC states that they will be working to define ways in which students can move through the curriculum based on mastery throughout all grade levels.

(d) The applicant provides limited evidence in this section that gives students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways. CREC does state the one example from above with the Cambridge IGCSE Board Examination System (that provides a proficiency-based high school pathway based on mastery.) However, there is limited evidence in this section of to support this practice by the LEA.

(e) The applicant describes an RTI model that has yielded results. The RTI teams communicate and intervene for struggling students regardless of special education status. The RTI process is a successful pairing with the implementation of a personalize learning environment. The applicant also supplies evidence to support the needs of English Language Learner through specific professional development, tutors and coordinators.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure

(a) The applicant provides evidence that student, parent, and educators will have access to content, tools, and learning resources both in and out of school. For example, P21 provides educators with professional development learning tools. Also, the applicant is researching 1:1 devices to provide access to student. Additionally, schools will utilize this technology to access learning resource with the "flipped classroom" model. CREC will work with Re-Inventing Schools Coalition (RISE) and New Classrooms to provide options for personalized learning environments.

(b) The applicant provides support for student, parent, educators, and stakeholders to have appropriate levels of support provided through:

- local school sites providing training for students and parents regarding the use of technology in schools for instruction, progress monitoring, and enrichment.
- teachers will be trained to fully utilize technology and in turn can act as support for students and families
- implementation of communication plans for families to increase understanding for personalized learning environments

CREC does not offer further details. This does not ensure multiple level of support, for example utilizing media centers as call centers for direct support for families for call-in technology support.

(c) CREC does not address the use of information technology systems which allow parents and students to export their information in an open format and to use data in other electronic learning systems.

(d) CREC does provide evidence to ensure schools will use inter operable data systems for student data and improved instructional systems. CREC does not provide evidence to ensure schools will use inter operable data systems for human resources and budget data.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(E)(1) Continuous Improvement Process</p> <p>CREC provides a comprehensive process and high quality plan to support a continuous improvement. The applicant provides many of examples of process for a model of research, plan, act, and implement. The appendix provides evidence for previous plans that detail results that were recently achieved through this process.</p> <p>CREC details a high quality strategy for monitoring, measuring, and publicly sharing the results of this project. In addition to internal process noted above the applicant will employ a third party independent evaluator to conduct a supplemental evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the investments. The applicant provides key targets for the evaluator to consider. These targets are justifiable and sound.</p> <p>Additionally, the applicant details Learning Development Inventory (LDI) which is a measure of a students' perception of their own level of development in several area associate with achievement, positive social adjustment, and social emotional development. LDI is based on sound research as a holistic school indicator for student success. Data from LDI will be an additional measure for grant success and represents a high quality plan for overall evaluation.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(E)(2) Ongoing Communication and Engagement</p> <p>CREC utilizes ongoing strategies for engagement with both internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>Externally:</p> <p>The district lists a number of external stakeholders that include parent organizations, student organizations, the business community, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, local government agencies, civil rights organizations, local school employee organizations, and institutions of higher education. For a strategy CREC will maintain ongoing through the district's network of websites. CREC lists specific ways they will utilize the website and the network to provide communication, including teacher use of the website for more direct communication with parents. Communication can be two ways, but does not necessarily translate into engagement. The applicant has inadequate strategies for face to face engagement with external stakeholders.</p> <p>Internally:</p> <p>The applicant does not specifically provide strategies for engaging internal stakeholders outside communication on the website. This is an area that is without details to support a meaningful level of engagement.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(E)(3) Performance Measures</p> <p>CREC utilizes ongoing strategies for engagement with both internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>Ambitious yet achievable performance measures both overall and by sub-group with annual targets</p> <p>(a) The applicant must describe it's rational for selecting measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CREC provides measures for performance: the number and percentage of students, by subgroup, whose teacher of record and principal of record are a highly effective / effective. The rationale for selecting this indicator is appropriate and reasonable. The rational considers sound logic; specifically that this indicator will focus the district around improving teacher and principal evaluations.</li> <li>District performance index (CREC will use the District Performance Index (DPI) as the measure that is</li> </ul>		

directly tied to student outcomes. Approved in Connecticut's ESEA waiver, the DPI gives credit for moving students up achievement levels on the CMT and CAPT. The following weights are assigned for performance in each achievement band: Below Basic = 0, Basic = .33, Proficient = .67, Goal = 1.0, and Advanced = 1.0. The weights are added together and averaged to calculate the DPI.)

The rationale for selection this indicator is sound in that it measures growth of students after they reach proficiency targets and encourages ongoing improvement for all students. It also supports a personal learning environment and a level of differentiated instruction.

The applicant provides other meaningful measures:

- Northwest Evaluation Association's MAP Assessment
- Number of students on-track for college and career readiness
- Number and percentage of participating students who complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid
- *?Above measures are appropriate.*

(b) The applicant describes how the number and percentage of students, by subgroup, whose teacher of record and principal of record are a highly effective / effective as noted above is a rigorous measure of success; this is justifiable.

The applicant describes how DPI as noted above is a rigorous measure of success; this is justifiable.

(c) The applicant does describe how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments

CREC states that long-term impact of of RTTT-D grant will be measured by student persistence and post-secondary school graduation. The applicant describes a data system in final development by Connecticut State Department of Education that will track and measure student post-secondary completion. This is a justifiable long-term measure, but the applicant does not describe the intended outcomes of this measure. Nor does the applicant describe what the LEA will examine or analyze once the long-term measures are calculated.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(F)(1) Budget for the Project

(a) The applicant does identify all funds that support the project (RTTT-D, other grant funds, LEA, State and Fed Funds)

(b) The applicant provides evidence that is reasonable and sufficient to support development and implementation. For example in budget 4-2 for project implementation the applicant lists staff for positions: Project Director, Administrative Assistant, Grant Coordinator, Capstone Coordinator, Director of Technology Integration, and College / Career Planning Specialist. Because of the scope of this project across all schools these staffing positions are reasonable and sufficient. Additionally the salaries and benefits requested for these position is reasonable.

(c) The plan is a clear and demonstrates a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. In general the budgeting process demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the financial planning process.

(i) The applicant includes a description of funds (RTTT-D, external foundation, LEA, State and Fed Funds)

(ii) The applicant identifies funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be ongoing operational costs that are incurred during and after the grant period. There is some focus on strategies that ensure long-term sustainability. For example staffing for positions provide a “front loaded” strategy to implement new projects, processes and systems. The assumption is that once these systems are embedded into the process that some of these personnel and leadership positions will no longer be needed. The applicant has a focus on capacity building.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals

The applicant has reasonable logic in the assumption concerning increase in revenue streams. Specifically, increased enrollment in schools based on capacity and newly started magnet schools. As well as an anticipate per pupil increase from state revenue based on a three year freeze in state per pupil funding levels. Additionally, the applicant will seek private and non-profit funding through local foundations. If these funding assumptions are not met it is logical based on budget numbers that CREC will need to reduce the scope of some projects from the RTTT-D proposal after the grant funding cycle.

Additionally, the district suggests examining staffing levels after assumed student enrollment increases.

The district assumes start up cost of \$150,000 for 1:1 devices for teachers and then \$15,000 annually, however CREC does not assume that at the end of the grant cycle the original devices will be at a mature level and functionality will have diminished resulting in more than the annual allotted amount.

The applicant demonstrates sustainability through developing professional development of new processes and systems at the early part of the grant cycle. This process builds capacity through training and investment with local staff.

The plan does include support from the state and local levels.

The applicant does include budget assumptions, sources, or use of funds that justify continuation of the project for the three years after the term of the grant. The district calculates \$3.7 million in annual revenue will be needed after the cycle of the grant.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Competitive Preference Priority

The applicant describes additional student and family supports to schools that will be addressed through family centers. CREC’s magnet schools enroll students primarily from 35 cities and towns throughout the region, making it difficult for families and students to participate in programming outside of school time. CREC Schools will establish three regional family centers known as Linking to Learning.

(1) The applicant provide a description of the partnership

Students will receive homework help and have access to enrichment activities focused on college and career readiness. The regional centers will increase family engagement in the learning process and strengthen the home- school connection.

(2) The applicant does Identify population-level desired results for students: Students will be identified as in need of

service through the SRBI process Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI), Connecticut's Response to Intervention (RTI) model.

(3) The applicant describes how the partnership would track the selected indicators:

With indicators:

- % of Students indicating they feel safe at school: Grades PreK-3
- Median rating on dimension for Social- Emotional Security on the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory: Grades 4- 8
- Median rating on dimension for Social- Emotional Security on the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory: Grades 9- 12

The applicant includes data targets to track results along the above indicators as well as a high quality plan based on research. The model can be scaled and results and targets are set to improve over time.

(4) The applicant does provide a compelling description towards about how the partnership would integrate education and other services. For example, the applicant states that Student and Family Crisis Team will enhance the ability of the educators to work in coordinated team. In particular, the Student and Family Crisis Team would integrate educational and other services. The applicant states suggests that this team is a model for supporting impacting the decision-making teams throughout CREC. These is sound logic to this and it represents a high quality plan.

5) The applicant describes how the partnership would build the capacity through:

1. Supporting students in a manner that addresses the social and emotional needs.
2. Student and Family Crisis Team will enhance the ability of the educators to work in coordinated team.

However

(6) The applicant identifies its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures though:

- % of Students indicating they feel safe at school: Grades PreK-3
- Median rating on dimension for Social- Emotional Security on the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory: Grades 4- 8
- Median rating on dimension for Social- Emotional Security on the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory: Grades 9- 12

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Personalized Learning Environments

The applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses "absolute priority" through a rigorous and ambitious overall plan. The applicant demonstrates a compelling set of strategies with a high quality plan for integration and implementation. The applicant sets forth ambitious, yet achievable goals throughout the application. The goals include a challenging expanded college and career readiness component, recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, and turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Core educational assurance areas set forth in the vision statement are solidly supported throughout the document and set a foundation for excellence. These core educational assurance areas are supported by strong plans for development and within a meaningful timeline. The applicant develops the use of comprehensive data systems and individualized student learning systems. Learning is designed to be individualized for each student through 1:1 technology and the "flipped classroom" model. Additionally there is a commitment to investing in teaching and leading through professional development, leadership, and supportive new coordinators and director positions as well as an investment in developing and retaining high quality teachers. The integration of an effective teacher and principal evaluation system is also logical.

Measurable sophisticated quality targets are threaded throughout the proposal and guide the reform process in a manner that values student growth and recognizes complexities in learning.

The applicant retains the core aspects of the current school culture through the expansion of the magnet school model. The applicant embraces the richness of multiple measure of diversity and utilizes the grant planning process to accentuate that core strength of CREC.

Overall the grant includes a great amount of detail, logical reasoning, sound educational strategies based on research, and a sweeping commitment to expand the scope and excellence of learning.

Total	210	187
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